

# High Capacity and Demand Management Transportation Programs

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## HOV Facilities Status

There are currently 191 lane-miles of freeway High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes open to carpools, vanpools, buses and motorcycles in the Puget Sound region. These HOV facilities are located on segments of Interstates 5, 90, and 405, and on State Routes 167 and 520. Since 1990 the region's freeway HOV system has grown by over 400%. WSDOT has planned a Puget Sound Core Freeway HOV Lane System of 297 lane-miles. In addition to the HOV lanes already open, there are 14 additional lane-miles currently under construction. Another 35 lane-miles are being designed; however, most of these do not have funding for lane construction. The remaining 57 lane-miles in the Puget Sound Core Freeway HOV Lane System remain in the planning stage, awaiting design and construction funding.

The Washington State Transportation Commission and WSDOT have made a commitment through *Washington's Transportation Plan* to complete the Puget Sound Core Freeway HOV Lane System by the year 2015, or earlier if funding becomes available. It will take about \$1.65 billion to complete the HOV Core Program.

In the Puget Sound region, virtually all regional plans and local comprehensive plans support completion of the regional freeway HOV system. In contrast, few new general-purpose highway lanes are proposed. HOV lanes support state Commute Trip Reduction and federal and state Air Quality goals for the region. HOV lanes continue to be a central feature in the strategy to accommodate growth in travel without incurring additional vehicle trips.

A new HOV lane is being planned in Clark County on I-5. This lane will provide an HOV connection between Vancouver and the Portland metropolitan region (please see Vancouver/ Clark County high capacity transportation planning information below). A regional HOV system study showed that I-5 had the highest levels of traffic congestion in the region, and that freeway HOV lanes could provide significant travel time savings to carpools, vanpools

and transit riders. It looked at the feasibility of operating a bi-state HOV facility in the I-5 corridor and concluded that this was a viable option. The state of Oregon currently operates a northbound HOV lane on I-5 through Portland to the Columbia River bridge. During the peak-period this HOV lane carries twice as many people as the other two northbound lanes.

## Park and Ride Facilities Status

At the close of 2000, the statewide public park and ride lot system consisted of approximately 297 lots offering 33,475 parking spaces to commuters and other motorists. The table, "Publicly Funded Park and Ride Lots," shows where these lots are. Two-thirds of these lots were in the Puget Sound region; there are 108 park and ride lots providing 15,926 free parking spaces in King County. It is estimated that on any weekday, over 80% of these spaces are full.

Washington State began operating its first park and ride lot at the Northgate Mall in north Seattle in the early 1970s to support the Blue Streak express bus service from Northgate to downtown Seattle. A recent study conducted by Washington State Department of Transportation identified a need for more than 15,000 additional park and ride stalls in King County by 2030. Clark, Spokane and Thurston county studies also show increasing demand for park and ride facilities. In addition to capacity deficiencies, especially in urban areas of the state, other key park and ride lot challenges include building consensus about who should pay for new park and ride facilities, lack of revenues, and difficulty in finding suitable sites mutually acceptable to local communities and the state.

### Commute Trip Reduction

CTR is an innovative performance-based program that improves transportation capacity without laying a single lane mile of pavement. More than 500,000 employees, at over 1,100 worksites in the state, benefit from commuter programs provided by their employers as a result of this effort. In 1999, participating employees eliminate more than 18,500 vehicles from the road during peak morning commute hours. The impact in the Puget Sound region alone is equivalent to the capacity of 22.5 new highway lane miles. Through their involvement in CTR, commuters conserved 6.5 million gallons of fuel in 1999. By changing their commute habits, these commuters saved over \$8 million in fuel costs. CTR complements more traditional capacity expansion projects. CTR also supports construction efforts by helping to mitigate traffic impacts during construction.

Major employers in the nine most populous counties in the state are charged with developing commute programs. Each worksite's program is developed by the employer and the local jurisdiction and is tailored for the specific circumstances at their worksite. Employees select from a variety of strategies as they develop their program: working from home, walking, bicycling, sharing the ride, riding the bus, and compressing the work week.

### WSDOT Park and Ride Inventory Created 4/96, Updated 1/01

WSDOT Region	County	Number of Lots	Number of Stalls
Northwest	Island	7	893
	King	108	15,926
	San Juan	2	67
	Skagit	7	220
	Snohomish	35	4,929
	Whatcom	6	363
<i>Totals</i>		165	22,398
North Central	Chelan	7	160
	Douglas	1	40
	Grant	4	94
<i>Totals</i>		12	294
Olympic	Clallam	4	182
	Grays Harbor	3	102
	Jefferson	4	143
	Kitsap	23	2,080
	Mason	4	125
	Pierce	24	3,340
	Thurston	7	578
<i>Totals</i>		69	6,550
Southwest	Clark	8	858
	Cowlitz	7	465
	Klickitat	1	19
	Lewis	3	150
	Pacific	1	13
	Skamania	1	30
<i>Totals</i>		21	1,535
South Central	Benton	8	627
	Franklin	1	50
	Yakima	8	376
<i>Totals</i>		17	1,053
Eastern	Spokane	13	1,645
<i>Totals</i>		13	1,645
Statewide Total		297	33,475

Employers encourage their employees to choose an alternative mode in a variety of ways including, making these modes accessible at the site, providing incentives, providing personal assistance in selecting commute alternatives, charging employees for parking, and creating an atmosphere that supports change.

In the early 1990s employer trip reduction targets were created by the State Legislature. Worksite impacts are measured every other year. After two years, employers seek to reduce commute trips by 15%, after four years by 20%, after six years by 25%, and after 12 years by 35%. Employer trip reduction targets in the CTR program extend through 2005; if program impacts increase at a constant rate until then, employers will have been successful in removing nearly 40,000 vehicles from the daily morning commute.

CTR works because it is a successful partnership between the private and public sectors. State leadership and investment in CTR is joined by substantial private investment. In 2001, employers invested over \$37 million through their CTR efforts. This represents a \$7 employer investment for each dollar invested by the state on the program.

WSDOT is working with the CTR Task Force, the program's policy body, to look at ways to increase impacts and to make the program more effective in responding to specific transportation problems. Transit systems have already begun to recognize the important role employers can play in creating a more efficient transportation system. Through employers, transit agencies are able to direct efforts where capacity is currently available. The WSDOT and the CTR Task Force are continuing to build off these efforts and create through CTR a responsive tool to improve the efficiency of the state's transportation system.

### High Capacity Transportation

WSDOT administers planning grants, which facilitate *high capacity transportation* (HCT) development in Washington State. HCT planning is authorized in Chapters 81.104 and 81.112 RCW. The 1999 State Legislature appropriated \$2.5 million to the High Capacity Transportation Account (HCTA), supporting planning projects in Clark, Spokane, and Thurston Counties. In November 1999, citizens of the state passed Initiative 695, which eliminated the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax, the funding source for the HCTA. Consequently, funding available to continue high capacity transportation planning in the state was substantially reduced in the Supplemental Transportation Budget, which followed. As a result, funding for the Thurston County project ended on December 31, 1999. Funding was reduced for the remaining Clark County and Spokane County projects, which are managed respectively by the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council and the Spokane Regional Transportation Council.

#### ***Vancouver/Clark County***

Clark County is Washington's fastest-growing county. This has resulted in increased traffic congestion and a loss of mobility for people and goods. In 1995 Clark County voters turned down a proposed HCT option that would connect the county with the Portland metropolitan area via an extension of Portland's light rail system. Community representatives and transportation professionals began looking at other options to meet the growing needs of the region. One strategy that received much attention was the feasibility of using high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes to link the communities.

After studying HOV options, recommendations of the Clark County HOV Study were presented to the RTC Board in November 1998. This study defined the role that HOV would play in Clark County. Policy ensured bi-state

coordination in HOV system planning for the Vancouver-Portland metropolitan area. The RTC Board adopted the study recommendations and moved forward with a strategic approach to implement HOV in the I-5 corridor.

The RTC submitted an application for 99 – 01 biennium HCTA funding and was awarded a planning grant to conduct an Interstate 5 HOV Corridor Feasibility Study and a comprehensive Clark County HCT Systems Study. The I-5 HOV Corridor Feasibility Study moved forward taking a more detailed look at the potential for developing HOV facilities on I-5.

With the passage of citizen Initiative 695, WSDOT notified RTC that funding for the two-year cycle of the planning grant would not be available as originally contemplated and planning activities were scaled back. The RTC made the decision to complete remaining activities of the I-5 HOV Operational Study by mid-2000 and focus remaining resources on developing an I-5 HOV Lane Public Information and Education Plan. The Clark County HCT Systems Study was eliminated before any funds were spent on developing this plan.

Work began on the I-5 HOV Lane Public Information and Education Plan in July 2000. This plan supports the WSDOT, regional, and bi-state decision to open a southbound HOV lane on I-5 in the Fall of 2001. As an I-5 widening project underway nears completion in Vancouver, an HOV lane will be added southbound between 99<sup>th</sup> Street and Mill Plain Blvd. It will operate during the morning commute providing a more reliable trip for carpoolers and bus riders heading to Portland for work – enhancing the connection between Washington and Oregon. The Oregon Department of Transportation has been operating a successful northbound HOV lane during the evening commute on I-5 in Portland between Going Street and Marine Drive since 1998. That lane carries 44 percent of the northbound commuters in the peak period, with a 70 percent approval rating according to public opinion surveys.

### **Spokane Region**

Building upon the results of the South Valley Corridor Major Investment Study, the Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC) worked on completing the draft environmental assessment. This included field archeological activities in the proposed alignment, as well as a historical properties inventory at the request of the Washington State Office of Historic Preservation. This project has received federal New Rail Start appropriations of \$6,917,279 since 1999.

In response to reduced state funding resulting from state legislation enacted resulting from Initiative 695, WSDOT reduced HCTA funding of the planning grant from \$1,850,000 to \$405,673 in June 2000. Based on this and other information, SRTC continued cautiously with the South Valley Corridor light rail preliminary design work. This reduced level of funding remains available for expenditure through June 2001.

Late in the year, Spokane Transit Authority issued a Request for Qualifications for consultant services for management of the South Valley Corridor Light Rail Project.

### **Safety and Security Plans for Rail Fixed Guideway Systems**

WSDOT continued the state's oversight responsibilities for the two passenger rail systems: the Seattle Monorail and the Seattle Waterfront Streetcar. For the most part, this was report preparation to the Federal Transit Administration.

WSDOT approved the *Seattle Monorail Safety & Security Assurance Plan*, prepared by the Seattle Center Foundation, who owns but contracts out the operation of the Seattle Monorail.

King County Metro Transit reported one accident, occurring in August. A tram failed to stop at the Jackson Street terminal of the line. This resulted in 22 persons being transported to local hospitals for observation and release. WSDOT chose not to investigate this accident, but reviewed King County

Metro Transit's accident investigation report and approved its proposed corrective action plan. This plan contained directions for several procedural and operational changes, as well as modification of the barrier at the Jackson Street terminal. King County Metro Transit completed almost all of these changes, including the modification of the barrier, by the end of the year.

Seattle Monorail Services, who contracts for the operation of the Seattle Monorail, reported five safety-related incidents accident that occurred during the year. These resulted in five persons being transported to local hospitals for observation and release. WSDOT chose not to investigate any of these accidents, but — in conjunction with the Seattle Center — reviewed Seattle Monorail Services' accident investigation reports and approved the corrective action plans. These plans contained directions for several procedural and operational changes. Seattle Monorail Services completed many of these changes by the end of the year.

